

# B R L MEMORANDUM

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by the

BRAILLE REVIVAL LEAGUE  
(An Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind)

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I do not wish to put a pall over this issue of our fine magazine. But I would be remiss if I were to say nothing at all about the cruel and untimely death of my friends Dick and Larry Evensen. The last issue was already in the computer when Dick and Larry were struck down on their way home. They were fellow graduates of Perkins, and I followed Dick's career with NLS with pride and admiration. Larry was our very competent treasurer, who will truly be difficult to replace. Not only have many of us lost two good friends; but all of us have lost two very strong advocates of braille. We must not dwell on this tragedy. We must instead move on in the furtherance of BRL's goals which Dick and Larry so earnestly espoused.

In the last few issues of our Memorandum, I have stated my position with respect to the braille code quite unequivocally. I am obviously rather conservative on this subject. But I have not claimed, as president, to be the spokesman for BRL. Nor has anyone else. Even Floyd Cargill, our fine editor, has carefully refrained from taking any public stand whatsoever in this matter. Judging from readers' response, however, it is quite obvious that there is a general consensus against radical changes. Just look at "Letters to the Editor" and the responses to Juliet Esterly's questionnaire. How can anyone conclude that BRL is advocating "all of those changes"? Be that as it may, let us continue to express our individual preferences and biases. We have substantially more than a year ahead of us



before the international conference in England which is now scheduled for September, 1988. The real issue ultimately is the achievement of a higher degree of uniformity among English-speaking peoples in such areas as mathematical and music braille, rules governing the use of contractions, the symbols of weights and measures, capitalization, etc. Any consideration of drastic changes will be a waste of precious time, resulting in failure to address the truly important issues. While this statement must not be construed as an official BRL pronouncement, I know I speak for a very tangible majority.

We talk a great deal (and with very compelling reason) about reduced production of braille, inferior teaching of braille or the lack of instruction at all, decreasing use of braille, and other nagging negatives. But let me touch upon a more positive vein for a change. I was literally thrilled to read in the spring issue of our newsletter Dr. Susan Ponchillia's article, "Braille at Western Michigan University"! I urge you to read it again and delight in it. In the winter, 1986 issue of DIALOGUE, there is a fine article by Deborah Kendrick about the company, Seedlings, which regularly produces braille books for blind children. The dedicated founder is Debra Bonde. And let me join Floyd Cargill in urging you to subscribe to the new weekly, World News Today. We'll have to pay for it. But our sighted friends have to pay for the magazines to which they subscribe. Why shouldn't we, if we can? And we can always pass them on to those who can't afford it.

Now, let's talk in person, face to face, at the Airport Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles, California, the site of the 1987 convention, July 11-18. The BRL sessions will take place Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons, July 15-17. Friday afternoon is actually a trip to the Braille Institute of America. There will be a \$4 registration for the BRL convention, and the bus fare for the trip will be \$8. Registration and bus fare will be \$5 and \$10 respectively if paid upon arrival. I certainly hope to see a great many of you in Los Angeles.--John di Francesco, President

### CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT

The following is a proposed new Article X for the Constitution of the Braille Revival League. It will be discussed and acted upon during the Business Meeting on Wednesday, July 15.

#### ARTICLE X

##### Affiliated Organizations

s'1. BRL shall encourage the formation of, and will support Affiliate Organizations.

s'2. An Affiliate Organization may be chartered in any: a) Community whose population exceeds two hundred fifty thousand (250,000); b) State of the Union; or, c) Territory or dependency of the United States.

s'3. The purpose and goals of the Affiliate Organization must be consistent with those of the Braille Revival League. Where there is disagreement the BRL Constitution shall take precedence.

s'4. Each Affiliate Organization shall assess an annual dues which shall include a surcharge equal to the annual dues of BRL, except that Life members of BRL shall be exempt from such surcharge.

s'5. Each Affiliate Organization shall have the right to elect a Delegate to be its representative at the annual convention of BRL.

s'6. The Affiliate Organizations shall be entitled to one (1) seat on the BRL Board of Directors, who shall be chosen annually at a caucus of the official Affiliate Delegates to be held immediately after the BRL Business Meeting is adjourned.

s'7. Where an Affiliate Organization of BRL now exists, or may in the future exist, no other Affiliate Organization will be recognized unless seventy-five (75) percent of the members of the existing Affiliate Organization vote to grant such recognition.

#### FROM THE EDITOR

The response to the questionnaire produced by the Braille Authority of the United Kingdom (BAUK) has been gratifying. We have received 60 responses and hope to receive many more. A tabulation of the responses will be included in either the September or December issue of the Memorandum.

The Braille Revival League and the Editor continue to receive criticism for advocating "all of those changes". Neither BRL nor the Editor is initiating those changes. You



have the right to be informed of all proposals so that you can react to them. We encourage you to do just that. Be as strong as you wish in your opposition to changes or in your advocacy for changes. Your frank participation will help the participants in the International Conference on Literary Braille to make an informed judgement that more accurately represents the wishes of braille users.

Each issue of the BRL Memorandum during the next year will contain major articles on the braille system. One or two issues will be devoted almost exclusively to your comments.

HELP! I need your help and advice desperately. At the earliest possible time give me your answers to the following questions: 1) If you were going to add some short-form word contractions to the Grade 2 Braille Code, what would they be? Examples of short-form words are "grt", "alt", "tgr", "ag". 2) If you were going to eliminate some short-form words from the present Grade 2 Braille Code, what would they be? 3) If you were going to add some righthand dot contractions to the Grade 2 Braille Code, what would they be? Examples of righthand dot contractions are "work", "day", "father", "word". Send your lists to Floyd Cargill, 216 West Miller Street, Springfield, IL 62702.

### A TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

I have been teaching either visually impaired or multihandicapped students for 10 years and have been braille much longer. I learned braille as a youngster in



the fifth grade and was certified at a very young age.

My girlfriend was blind. We needed to pass notes back and forth in class. She could get her notes to me by typing them. I, on the other hand, had no way of replying. So necessity was the instigator for my learning braille.

My friend taught me to read by touch because she thought the dots would be too small for a sighted person to see. I was 11 years old then and I find that I "think in braille" now. I do not see print symbols in my head anymore.

Another interesting little tidbit: I drove a tractor-trailer for a time and used to write my directions to various distributors in braille so that I could read and drive at the same time!

I have been to various state meetings designed for the teachers of the visually impaired. At one meeting there were 25 of us. One was an older partially seeing woman who had been taught braille back in the days of the "sight saving" schools. This woman and I were the only two in the room who had a working knowledge of braille. The other 23 teachers, even though they had braille readers on their caseloads, did not know braille. Some of them taught at the state school for the blind! I was appalled! Also, we have a teacher of the visually impaired in our own system who has three totally blind children on her caseload but possesses no usable braille skills. This makes me ashamed of my own profession.

The excuses I hear from my fellow teachers are: "It's

too hard"; "They have cassettes now"; "The student knows it, why do I have to learn it too?". I also hear variations of these statements.

This is what I'm leading to: As a teacher of blind students and as a braillist, I have not heard of any of these proposed changes in the braille code except through the Braille Revival League. I find this absolutely horrendous. Please continue to keep us posted on what is going on with the plans for the International Conference on Literary Braille. I am very interested in this subject. Are there any BRL chapters in the states?--A Teacher of the Visually Impaired

#### PROMOTE BRAILLE: BE A READER

In addressing a gathering of blindness professionals (most of whom were sighted), I mentioned my work as editor of TACTIC, a consumer-based computer magazine available only in braille. Someone asked how he might obtain a print copy of the magazine.

"You can't," I told him, and added, when he expressed a sense of injustice at the information being unavailable to sighted folk, "get yourself a reader."

I have used that remark several times over the past months in similar situations, and it always elicits the same amused response. Most people assume that I'm joking.

It occurs to me that in promoting the revival (and, indeed, survival) of braille, this notion of reading to the sighted could be one avenue for our energies. Great change

is often effected in subtle ways. Even the most knowledgeable professionals are not always intrinsically aware their blind colleagues are reading that stuff if they never see and hear us doing it.

I always carry The New York Times Large Type Weekly (braille edition) with me on buses, planes, etc. If I am chatting with someone (the driver, the person beside me), I have begun pointing out interesting items aloud. Apply this to any daily situation. If you work in a rehab facility, for example, and you come across something interesting in Journal of Blindness and Visual Impairment or Psychology Today, stroll over to the office next door and share it with a colleague. Or, maybe you're a computer enthusiast and subscribe to TACTIC; offer to read selected articles to sighted computer aficionados or people working in the blindness field.

The point is, while they may know intellectually that it is a reading method, many sighted people--including blindness professionals--don't genuinely believe in braille as an equivalent to print. If we continue to keep it a private little secret, it may one day be so exclusive that only those of us in the Braille Revival League know anything about it!

Remember the old adage "turnabout is fair play"? You have certainly had many readers assist you in accessing print. Return the favor: Be a reader yourself.--Deborah Kendrick, OH



## BRAILLE MADE IT POSSIBLE

Most of us have dreamed of the perfect life, the perfect home, the perfect family, the perfect job--or what we would consider to be relatively perfect for us. Yet, few people ever realize even one such dream to a real degree of satisfaction. I have managed to obtain what is to me the perfect job. For 20 years I hoped it would happen but never did I dream that braille would make it possible. Synthetic speech seemed plausible, but braille? Never!

I am a travel consultant. About 20 years ago I approached my rehab counselor, Gretta Gadston, with this idea. It was not possible then, but she could see that, someday, it would be a very real possibility. She encouraged me to stay on top of new technological developments, go on with other career plans for the time, and before too long, it would all happen for me.

She was right. Cosmopolitan Travel was accepted as the official travel agency for the American Council of the Blind in 1986 and I as the official agent. At that time my use of braille was limited to the notes I took for myself when a sighted person booked trips in the computer and dictated the information to me. The notes were taken using the Perkins brailler. I had a Versa-braille but could never abandon either the Perkins brailler or the slate and stylus. I use braille from the bottom up. As each new technological device becomes available, I embrace it with open arms. Yet, I consider it unwise to think that any new device will ever extinguish the need for those that preceded it. The



importance of the slate and stylus today is as great as it was 50 years ago. The value of the Perkins brailier constantly increases.

Paperless braille devices are nothing short of a God-send. While I appreciate my Versa-braille, my pride and joy is the Braille Display Processor (BDP) manufactured by VTEK of California. This amazing device has opened the door to my successful employment in a field that was once just a dream. It enables me to use the same computer that my sighted colleagues use. It is not a specialized computer for blind people but a braille output device that gives me access to flight information, cruise lines, rental cars, rail travel and tour companies. Anything that is available to the sighted agent on the screen is available to me in braille. I love it! Each time those wonderful dots appear beneath my fingertips I can hardly control myself. I display it proudly as I serve clients by telephone or those who walk into the office. My phone clients need never know of my blindness though I never try to hide it. Therefore, I can confidently and competently serve my walk-in clients with the effectiveness and efficiency that they deserve. As I quote their fares and schedules they watch the screen and know that they are getting accurate information. There is neither time nor reason for the degrading comments. I write their tickets using the computer, present them, and send them on their way with a business card and a request for a chance to see them again.

I have yet another dream. I want to provide braille

readers with travel information of all kinds in braille: Excerpts from brochures, itineraries, agency advertisement newsletters, or anything that is germane. Last year I provided braille itineraries with the help of the VTEK Braille Product Manager, Nick Dotson. My blind clients who use braille far outnumber those who do not, and only a few will say that, though they use braille, they would rather depend on sighted spouses, friends, or secretaries, to read to them. Without a braille printer of my own it is difficult to provide this service as quickly as I would like. I will keep working to achieve my desired goal and I welcome any suggestions or ideas from BRL Memorandum readers.

Thank you for understanding, patience, and support.--  
Linda Ward, Travel Consultant, Cosmopolitan Travel Service,  
3630 Rogero Road, Jacksonville, FL 32211; phone in Florida  
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1-904 743-9080.

### BRAILLE IS NOT DIFFICULT

I had a lot of fun learning braille five years ago and I love reading it. Something is only as hard as you want to make it.

I was lucky and learned to read Grade II braille in seventh grade before I started reading all of the articles telling me how hard it is to learn!

I am sure that all the people who are developing proposals to radically change the braille code are putting a



lot of time into it. As far as I am concerned they could be putting their time and talent to much better use in promoting the use of braille.

Not every sighted person is a speedy reader--no matter how much or how long they read. So it is with blind people reading braille. There are some blind people who can read braille every bit as fast as a sighted person reads print; and some blind people can read even faster. Unfortunately, some people, both sighted and blind, just never become good readers no matter how hard they try.

Instead of telling people how hard it is to learn braille we should be encouraging them to learn it and let them find the way they can learn it best. Give them a real reason to use it constantly. You cannot use braille once every six months and expect to be a whiz at reading it. Use it in some way every day.

Just as sighted people develop their own system of abbreviating words for personal use, blind people should and do the same. However, we need a medium for everyone, and we have that in the existing braille code. We must keep braille and promote its use in order to avoid even more confusion. We need to be encouraging schools to teach more braille, and stress the need for teaching students to write with the slate and stylus as well as a braillewriter. We need more qualified rehabilitation instructors to teach braille to newly blinded people. Reading and writing braille must be stressed as a means of enhancing independence and the simplification of daily living activities. It is a tragedy when blind clients are discouraged from

learning braille because the teachers do not want to take the time to teach it. All sighted instructors working with blind clients should be required to have a certificate in braille or they would not be qualified for the job. Much too often sighted instructors just do not realize that without braille a blind person is technically illiterate.

State and federal agencies serving blind clients should be encouraged to provide braille correspondence for those who request it. Insurance companies and other large agencies should purchase one of the braille printers in order to make corresponding with their clients easier. There is nothing more aggravating than to receive mail and have to wait to have someone read it to you.

The thorough teaching of braille in residential schools for the blind and blind students enrolled in regular school systems should be mandatory and vigorously stressed. Something needs to be done to reduce the cost of paperless braille devices so that the average person, including students, can afford one. As it is now very few people can have braille computers or Versa-brailles. We could better devote our time and energies to teaching and promoting the use of braille.

Our braille code has served us well for many years and is set up so it can continue to do so for many more. I have personally become so dependent on braille I could not do without it. I keep a braille ledger for my checkbook and since I started my checkbook has balanced every time--a great improvement over how it was before!



I tend to get on my soapbox where braille is concerned but I have tried to tone this down a little. I can get rather steamed up but I think I have collected my thoughts well enough that our readers can be encouraged to promote braille.--Linda Godfrey, Sullivan, IN

MEMORY AIDS FOR BRAILLE  
by Juliet Bindt Esterly

One argument to change Standard English Braille is that it is too hard to learn and so should have many contractions either dropped or changed. Most of the trouble is the method by which one learns--self-taught or taught by teachers who have little familiarity with the way the code was built. By recognizing its logical development, one can find valuable memory aids. As a California state braille teacher of the adult blind and sighted transcribers for 32 years, I developed some associations that can help those having trouble learning braille.

First, note that the 63 possible combinations of the six dots in the braille cell have been arranged in a logical pattern of seven lines as follow:

<u>Line</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Pattern</u>
1.	1 1-2 1-4 1-4-5 1-5 1-2-4 1-2-4-5 1-2-5 2-4 2-4-5	Upper 4 dots
2.	1-3 1-2-3 1-4-3 1-4-5-3 1-5-3 1-2-4-3 1-2-4-5-3 1-2-5-3 2-4-3 2-4-5-3	Add dot 3 to line 1

3. 1-3-6 1-2-3-6 1-4-3-6      Add dots 3-6 to line 1  
1-4-5-3-6 1-5-3-6 1-2-4-3-6  
1-2-4-5-3-6 1-2-5-3-6  
2-4-3-6 2-4-5-3-6
4. 1-6 1-2-6 1-4-6 1-4-5-6      Add dots 6 to line 1  
1-5-6 1-2-4-6 1-2-4-5-6  
1-2-5-6 2-4-6 2-4-5-6
5. 2 2-3 2-5 2-5-6 2-6      Lower 4 dots  
2-3-5 2-3-5-6 2-3-6 3-5  
3-5-6
6. 3-4 3-4-6 3-4-5-6 3-4-5      All characters have dot 3  
3 3-6      but none have dots 1 or 2
7. 5 4-5 4-5-6 4 4-6 5-6 6      Only dots 4, 5 and 6

Thus, the first ten letters of the alphabet have no bottom dots, so a character with dot 3 or 6 could not be the letters "d" or "h". When writing a letter from the center of the alphabet, you know you must have a dot 3. Note that "w" is at the end of line 4. This is because there was no "w" in the French alphabet when Louis Braille made this code in 1829.

Every letter must have a top and a left hand dot. So, "a" can only go in the dot 1 position. All letters have a dot 1 until "i". Here, relieve any stress with a little humor, "You know it isn't very modest for I to have number one." By remembering that every letter up to "i" has a dot 1, it helps to distinguish between "e" and "i".

The four characters on line 1 that have three dots can be seen as "corners" of a box. They come alphabetically by

starting with the upper right corner and going counterclockwise around the box: "d", "f", "h" and "j". Note their similarity to capital print letters: "d" turns like "d", "f" like "f" and "j" like "j". Associate "h" with the upper left corner of a print "h". In general, I favor stressing dot positions instead of shapes to avoid confusion when slate writing starts.

Stress that the second ten letters of the alphabet, "k" through "t", are on line 2 and just like the character above them plus dot 3. If a character is like "b" plus dot 3, it will be toward the first part of line 2 and not an "r" or "t". Also remember that "s" and "t" will have no dot 1.

Handle the characters of line 3 in the same way. Always match them with line 1 and not line 2. Again, mention that "w" is not in these first 5 characters that form the last part of the alphabet by adding dots 3-6 to line 1. Visualize the dot patterns.

The last five characters on line 3 are the "biggies"--symbols for several letters that can represent a whole or a part-word, and can also be placed next to each other as whole words without a space. They are even so important that they can be followed without a space by an "escort a".

Line 4 starts out with five part-word contractions that come alphabetically: "ch", "gh", "sh", "th", and "wh", with four of them having whole-word meanings that begin with these letters. There is no special association with the next four part-word signs and "w". The "ou" also means a whole-word that begins with these letters, which is a good



association.

Line 5 is quite a mixture. The first four of these dropped characters are punctuation marks that mean pauses of increasing length: dot 2 is the comma and shortest pause; dots 2-3 is the semi-colon which is the next longest pause; dots 2-5 is the colon and a still longer pause; while dots 2-5-6 is the period or full stop. Many people are not sure about the use of a semi-colon and a colon, and this provides a way to tactfully explain them. Dots 2-3-5 is the exclamation mark--phfff! Dots 2-3-5-6 is the opening and closing parentheses which "box in" explanatory words. Dots 2-3-6 is the question mark--huh? If dots 2-3-6 is at the beginning of the word, it means opening quotation mark; dots 3-5-6 at the close of the word is closing quote. To remember these, put the tip of your thumbs together along a horizontal line and extend your index fingers upward. Roughly, this is the shape of these signs and show how they are used to enclose words.

Also, some characters on line 5 represent whole-words: "be", "enough", "to", "were", "his", "in" and "was" or "by". Dropped "b" also means "be" as a syllable at the beginning of a word.

In the middle of a word, some of these characters mean double letters: "bb", "cc", "dd", "ff" and "gg". It is best to teach these signs in groups according to their use, rather than explaining all possible meanings at the same time.

Line 6 must be "just learned". Note its pattern so as



not to confuse it with others.

Line 7 consists of composition signs which change the meaning of the character following them. Dot 4 says that there is an accent mark on the next character. Dots 4-6 italicizes. Dots 5-6 announces that what follows is just one or more letters--no contractions. Dot 6 capitalizes.

There are nine possible possible punctuation and composition characters that may be put before a word. Understanding their usage helps recognize which they are and in which order they should appear. Starting with the sign that is closest to the first character in the word and progressing outward to the left, they are in the following order:

1. Dot 4--Accent sign could not have anything between it and the character that is to be accented.

2. Dot 6--Capital sign must join the character it is to affect, unless that character is accented.

3. Dot 3--The apostrophe is not to be capitalized, so it precedes the capital sign.

4. Dots 5-6--Letter sign cannot be affected by an apostrophe or capital sign, so it precedes both.

5. Dots 3-4-5-6--Number sign is treated like the letter sign.

6. Dots 4-6--Italics include the number sign, the letter sign, an apostrophe and capital, so it precedes them all.

7. Dots 2-3-6/3-5-6 single, and 6 2-3-6/3-5-6 3 double quotation marks cannot be affected by any of the above but

can enclose all of the above, so precede them.

In general, a double quote is used when a single quote has already been used. The new rule for transcribers is to follow the print copy.

8. Dots 6 2-3-5-6/2-3-5-6 3--Square brackets are usually used inside parentheses. They cannot affect the above marks but can enclose all of them, so precede them.

9. Dots 2-3-5-6/2-3-5-6--Parentheses can include all of the above signs and so come before any other punctuation and composition sign.

The last three characters on line 7 are also used to form part-word medial and terminal signs (both the same) by appearing before the last letter of the contraction, e.g., 4-6n is "sion"; 5-6n is "tion" and 6n is "ation". Three pairs of these contractions can be confusing until arranged in numerical order, which makes the meanings come alphabetically. Dots 4-6e is "ance" and dots 5-6e is "ence". Dots 4-6n is "sion", while 5-6n is "tion". Dots 4-6s is "less" and 5-6s is "ness".

Another way to recognize and remember these medial and terminal contractions is to learn two "silly words" made from the last letters of each contraction group, i.e., denst is for all the contractions formed with dots 4-6: "ound", "ance", "sion", "less" and "ount". Dots 5-6 produce eglnsty: "ence", "ong", "ful", "tion", "ness", "ment", and "ity". By saying the "silly word", the desired contraction can be associated with the right group.

The first three characters of line 7 are used to form

contractions that can be used either as a whole or a part-word, e.g.: "work", "word" and "world", or as part-words: "working", "wordy", and "unworldly". All of these so-called initial contractions begin with the character that is in the contraction. Most are formed with dot 5. "Silly sentences" can help distinguish the other two groups. ("Connecting words" are in parentheses.) For contractions with dots 4-6: Upon (my) word, whose (are) these (and) those? For contractions with dots 4-5-6: Cannot had many in their spirit world. This is especially helpful in distinguishing between "there", "these" and "their".

As learning progresses, cease consciously being aware of the dot position numbers and begin to visualize the character as black dots on white paper. Be observant of the spaces so as to be able to quickly distinguish between and--you, so--the or people--quite. Note the space between "ac" and "ca" or "bu" and "4-5u". Fingertips should slide primarily in a horizontal direction so as to pick up the height of characters. Since only 15 of the possible 63 do not have a dot 1 or 4, follow along the top edge of the character.

Returning to the alphabetical word signs, note that all except "x", begin with the letter that represents the word. Some of the proposals for changing Grade II would change this and, for example, use the letter "d" for "said", the letter "e" for "he" and "r" for "has". Presumably the purpose in revising the code is to make it easier to learn and read. More emphasis seems to be put on how frequently



words are used and to include them in the revision. Logic and association are important parts of learning and I hope this will be considered by code revisionists.

BRAILLE TECHNOLOGY:  
ITS COST AND SERVICE  
by Barbara Mattson

TeleSensory, Inc. (TSI) is manufacturing a VersaBraille II Plus I (VersaBraille with one built-in disk drive). I am sure the new machine was developed in response to suggestions made by VersaBraille II users and prospective buyers. I understand, as a result, the VersaBraille II is no longer being manufactured. As an owner of a VersaBraille II, I WONDER HOW LONG IT WILL BE BEFORE I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET MY MACHINE SERVICED?!

I would like to invest in a FORTH programming kit and I look forward to the Spellcheck Program which will now cost \$50. These investments will be a loss if I will not be able to get my machine repaired after the next five years. This statement is based on predicted termination of manufacture and repair for the P2C given in the Fall, 1985 VersaNews.

Having only one device to maintain and carry when working away from home is the big advantage to VersaBraille II. I am beginning to think, however, that I should purchase a cheaper "normal" computer and a voice synthesis or a simple braille output so I can be assured of longer support services and local service for less money.

It seems that TSI is gaining a reputation for marketing



a device whose "bugs" are corrected along the way, but at some point, development is stopped in favor of a new product. In order to keep functioning at the level I wish, it appears that I have to trade in my aid to spend a few more thousand dollars to get one that can be serviced. TO STOP THIS VICIOUS CYCLE NEW EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE MADE WITH STANDARD AND CHEAPER PARTS SO THAT THE BUYER CAN FEEL HE IS GETTING HIS MONEY'S WORTH! I truly hope the new Versa-Braille II's parts are like the original one's so all of my worry is in vain.

TSI assures me that my worry is in vain. Yet, they expect that the VersaBraille II Plus will replace the VersaBraille II so that orders for VersaBraille II's will drop below the point that manufacturing can be sustained. They don't expect the service of VersaBraille II's to be affected since most parts are common between the two products.

Modern technology that can be used to promote and enhance the use of braille should be priced so that more people can own it and the owners should be assured of longterm service. The price of normal computer equipment has come down drastically in the last several years. Why doesn't braille technology do the same?

THE HELPING HAND  
by Roger Petersen  
2211 Latham St. Apt. 120  
Mountain View, CA 94040

The Braille Transcribing Service of The Lighthouse is announcing its 1986 catalog of braille pamphlets available for sale. The free catalog lists more than 70 pamphlets dealing with a variety of subjects, including knitting, health care, citizens' rights, New York City, games and cooking. The average cost per item is \$2.00. For a copy of the catalog write to: Braille Transcribing Service, The Lighthouse, 111 E. 59th Street, New York, NY 10022.

The Lighthouse also has available in braille the music magazine, Overtones, no longer distributed through the National Library Service. The annual subscription rate is \$12.00 for six issues. The material consists of re-prints of articles from leading music journals and current newspapers and covers such subjects as music literature, performers, composers, music education, jazz and popular music. Your check or money order should be made out to The New York Association for the Blind and mailed to The Lighthouse at the above address.

TACTIC, an international braille quarterly dealing with technology for the visually impaired is offered through the Clovernook Printing House for the Blind. The consumer-oriented magazine offers practical information on hardware and software using braille, synthesized speech or enlarged print output. It features reviews written by blind and

visually impaired consumers--both professionals with technical expertise and those working in other fields who have intimate knowledge of one product.

Regular features such as "Talk-Tech", "Tac-Tech", and "For Your Information" carry short news items of newly released products, programs or services related to technology and the popular "Feedback" provides a forum in which readers exchange problems, solutions and tips.

TACTIC has subscribers and authors from throughout the United States, Canada, Germany, China, New Zealand, Denmark and other countries. The subscription price is \$10 annually. To subscribe write to TACTIC, Clovernook Printing House for the Blind, 7000 Hamilton Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45231. Articles may be submitted to the editor, Deborah Kendrick, at the same address.

The Woodside Terrace Kiwanis Braille Project, formed in 1969, is known for making available on loan or for purchase, books "for leisure reading" and "for leisure eating". There are 43 cookbooks available from their collection. A catalog is free for the asking. Try them--they guarantee complete satisfaction! Address inquiries to Mrs. Murray Draper, Chairman, Woodside Terrace Kiwanis Braille Project, 850 Longview Road, Hillsborough, CA 94010.

Joe Singer announces his intention to attend the BRL Convention in Los Angeles and invites all Grade 3 braille enthusiasts to meet with him for discussion. Joe issues a newsletter, "Outlines", that deals exclusively with Grade 3 braille. To receive a copy write Joe Singer, c/o Blind



Services C.I.L., 2539 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.

William M. Raeder, Managing Director, announces that the National Braille Press has entered into an agreement for domestic sales of library books that NBP produces under contract to NLS/BPH. Three titles are scheduled for production and distribution in 1987. The Harvard Bartender's Guide is currently under production. Notices of availability, dates and prices will be forthcoming.

Lori Castner, 215 West MacArthur Blvd., A535, Oakland, CA 94611, offers her address as a clearing house for persons who have questions about braille specialty codes, for example, Nemith Code, braille music code, braille computer code, etc. In order that braille can continue to be a flexible reading system that meets the needs of a diverse readership, Lori wants to help the Braille Revival League encourage braille readers to remain knowledgeable in specialty areas of the braille code. She wants to head up a Braille Revival League "Braille Specialty Committee" consisting of members who have an understanding of the specialty codes. If you want to serve on such a committee because of your knowledge of a specific specialty code or if you have a question about a specialty code, contact Lori Castner.

Gayle Sabonaitis, 12 Maxwell Street, Worcester, MA 01607, can put the following three books on VersaBraille cassette for any BRL readers who work with the VB and IBM PC: IBM DOS Manual; IBM Lotus Manual; IBM Basic Manual. Just send four Maxell UDXL1 C60 cassettes if you want all three manuals. IBM Lotus fits on two tapes and the others

need one tape each. Gayle says she can do the work quickly and get the tapes back to the owner in a week.

Martin Kennedy, Manager, announces that the Howe Press will sponsor a repair training course covering the essentials of manufacture, assembly and repair of the Perkins Brailier. The course will start on June 15, 1987 and continue for up to six weeks, depending on the needs of the students enrolled. The course is designed for individuals working in a large organization who will be directly responsible for repairing and maintaining Perkins Brailiers. Martin states that there are more than 176,000 Perkins Brailiers in circulation and the need for qualified repair personnel grows steadily. He hopes to establish authorized repair centers around the world. The closing date for applications was March 30, 1987.

### FUN WITH BRAILLE

by Maxine Dorf

8815 Woodland Dr.

Silver Spring, MD 20910

In this issue of BRL Memorandum "Fun with Braille" will have to be derived from seeing how good you are in proofreading braille copy. First, carefully proofread the following paragraph:

"Wh"at is brl? Brl is a key "t" op-"en"s 4-5-6m  
diff"er""en"t doors 2-3-54-5-6m di2-3-5"er""en"t bl p. C y  
imag"in"e "the" "th"rill t comes 2-3-5an 3-5-  
tellectu6y "st""ar"v"ed" "ch" oo adult "wh""en" 2-3-62-6 get

2-3-6 h"and"s on 2-3-6 f"st" brl book "and" su"dd""en"ly  
r"ea"lizes t 5h is a key t w admit him 2-3-5all "the"  
tr5sure vaults "of" lit"ed"ature. If he is seri"ou"s "in"  
"his" d"ed"ic5n 2-3-5l"ea"rn"ing", "th" key c l"ea"d hm 2-3-  
54-5-6m "of""the" textsbooks he w ne"ed" 5"th""ou"t 2-3-6  
elem"en"t"ar"y "and" secondty s"ch"ool"ing". "Wh""en" he  
goes "to"college' he : use x "for" tak"ing" nots on  
lectures, "and" l"ar"gely 5"th" "the" e"ff"orts "of"  
volunte"er"s he has accepp "to""the" necess"ar"y texts "and"  
supplem"en"t"ar"y r"ea"d"ing" matt"er".

And now, proofread the short verse:

A dog at y"ou"r side is a wond"er"ful guide,

"And" a cane helps "to"li"gh"t"en" "the" strife;

B "the"re's no"th""ing", y"ou""ll f"in"d, "for" a man "wh"o  
is bl

T's "as" gd "az" a see"ing"-eye wife

If you did a perfect job in your proofreading, you  
should have found 26 errors in the paragraph and seven in  
the verse.

### THERE'S AN IDEA

by Grace D. Napier

2011 Eighth Avenue

Greeley, CO 80631

If you entertain frequently--from sit-down dinners to  
informal occasions--you may want to avoid repeating the same  
foods served to a given guest. Do not try to rely on your  
memory. Instead, keep a file on cards in braille with basic



information, such as:

Jerry and Tina Brown; Larry and Mildred Smith, Oct. 11,  
baked chicken, green salad, baked potatoes, French-style  
green beans, chocolate mousse

Now when the Browns and Smiths come again, you do not have  
to repeat that meal or any part of it, if this is a matter  
of concern to you.

If you keep a supply of greeting cards in the house as  
a general rule for all occasions--birthday, get-well,  
congratulations, sympathy, etc.--sort them with a seeing  
relative or friend. With each classification, attach a file  
card in braille with the name of that group, such as:  
wedding anniversary. Then, when an occasion arises and if  
you are alone, you can still send out that card without  
having to wait for seeing help.

Instead of labeling your phonograph records in braille--  
whose labels must be very limited because of space--insert  
braille paper into the jacket, containing as much informa-  
tion as you want in braille. If you plan carefully, you can  
have the basic brailled information affixed to the jacket,  
too, such as "Mozart's 40th Symphony". The information on  
the inside would supply more details: orchestra, conductor,  
soloist, etc."

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

My wife, Doris (Clevenger) Brockman died February 21,  
1987. A word of appreciation is in order. My wife was an

avid braille reader and enjoyed reading so very much. All the material for the blind gave her countless hours of inspiration and enjoyment.--Rev. Maurice E. Brockman, Bloomfield, IN.

//////////

I do hope braille can be kept alive and growing, but can it when the residential schools sometimes don't teach it--especially the stylus? Unfortunately many of the city schools that are main-streaming the severely visually impaired students don't either, even though the teacher is supposed to know braille.

I, fortunately, no longer need it (and I'm getting rusty) but at one time I could not have gotten along without it, and I wasn't young when I learned it.--Deloris E. Largent, Marion, IN

//////////

As editor, are you the one who should receive the comments on matters brought up by others or should they go to those whose names are given? I think you are the one who should receive them so they can go into the BRL Memorandum.

Ms. Dorf, I seem to make more mistakes writing on a slate than on a braille writer. Like "dather" for "father" which I try to overcome by punching those dots nearest together, like "w", dots 2-6-5-4, "5", dots 3-6-5-4 1-5.

Ms. Dorf, those misspelled dot examples are very good. Did you ever hear of the wicked Bible? The Bible printer, when copying the seventh commandment, forgot a word so it

read "Thou shalt commit adultery," for which he was heavily fined. I think that happened in Holland in 1645. Let's have more examples of left-out dots.--Abraham Gulish, NJ (Editor's Note: When the full address accompanies an author's name it is expected that replies may be sent to either the author or the editor. In the case of the regular authors of "Fun with Braille", "There's an Idea", and "Helping Hand", replies should be sent directly to them unless you specifically want the reply to be included with "Letters to the Editor".)

//////////

On March 6, I conducted a "Talkback" show over Radio Information Service about braille. I read some articles from the BRL Memorandum and then asked listeners to call in and talk about how they used braille and what they thought about proposals to change braille. We heard from several enthusiastic braille supporters, all of whom felt that braille should stay pretty much as it is. I thought you might find their comments interesting so I am sending you a tape recording of the program.--John Weidlich, Program Director, Radio Information Service, Belleville, IL (Editor's Note: Thank you, John. It would be wonderful if more RIS directors would follow your example.)

//////////

My husband and I are both braille readers and are glad to see its value more and more appreciated. Cassettes and discs have their place but braille is very necessary. Keep



up the good work.--Ruth and Byron Bloss, Indianapolis, IN

//////////

I think having the braille calendar for a fund raiser is a great idea (BRL Memorandum, December, 1986). One year I moved several times and had to obtain a braille calendar from a friend. It would be hard for me to do my job without a calendar. I am a telephone operator at a Ben Franklin Variety Store.--Janet Schwartz, Quincy, IL

//////////

Many people have trouble learning braille because of its rules. I was taught braille in first and second grade. My teacher managed to do it without bogging me down with the memorization or even the mention of rules. I sympathize with people who have lost their sight and find braille a formidable thing to attempt to learn but I question whether simplifying braille would actually encourage them to learn it.

I think punctuation should follow print as closely as possible. Why can't the opening and closing quotation marks be the same sign? I think parentheses are different in print but the same in braille. In my opinion this should be changed.--Lorie McCloud, San Antonio, TX

//////////

Yes, I do want to be a paid-up member in good standing again, and thank you for being so patient with me and not dropping me from the list as the Memorandum means a great deal to me. It is my intention to become a Life Member of

BRL.

Much of the problem in getting blind adults to learn braille is not with the system but with the teaching methods. I worked with Claudell Stocker at the Rehabilitation Center in Topeka on her simplified teaching method. It has worked for many people. Nothing is deleted from the system itself. We simply bypass Grade I and give the student whole-word signs and short-form words along with the letters. Thus, in the first lesson we introduce the letters "a", "b", "c" and "d" along with "but", "can", "do", "about", "according" and "could". The need to write a word in two or three different ways is eliminated. The mind should not be cluttered with all of those rules. The whole rule book can be summed up in two rules: 1) Don't use contractions when they will cause confusion; and 2) Don't contract a word in a way that will lead to misspelling. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," I feel.

I like the idea of your "adopt a braille transcriber" project. I have mountains of material I would just love to get under my fingertips! I couldn't pay an arm and a leg for it, but could certainly keep at least one transcriber busy for a long, long time.--Mary Walton, Kansas City, MO

//////////

Dorothy Dykema's article, "Why Encourage Illiteracy", in the January, 1987 BRL Memorandum inspires me to write. I am grateful to a "home teacher" who gave me a firm

foundation in braille, all the way through Grade 3 for college use, before telling me about talking books. Bless his soul, because he also had me writing well with a slate and stylus before advising me (not showing) that a braillewriter existed.

Mainstreaming, usually with sighted teachers who have poor skill in braille, is, of course, the cause of illiteracy among so many young blind people. I acknowledge the contribution of the computer and computer programmers to the breakdown Dorothy showed, but I don't blame them as strongly as she did. Rather, it is the need to drill home the rules, as she implied. I was lucky to be sighted till age 17; had learned spelling, grammar and spacing well, before braille became my medium at age 18.--Don Morrow, Chicago, IL

.....

Unfortunately I have been too busy to participate in the Braille Revival League actively, but I do support its goals and hope to help with activities in the future. The newsletter is excellent and I read it faithfully.--Karen Perzentka, Madison, WI

#### MEMBERSHIP

The following have contributed \$5 to become new members of the Braille Revival League.

Ingrid Bettis, TN

Allison Burrows, NY



Michael Castner, CA  
Pat Cox, CA  
Marleen Eckert, MO  
Gloria Evans, MA  
Gloria Garrett, MD  
Japan Braille News, Japan  
Phyllis Jones, MD  
Janice Linson, KS  
Mary Mahoney, MD  
Lisa McLaughlin, OK  
Nassir Mosa, TN  
Preston Moses, CA  
Ethel Nicholson, CA  
Betty Osborne, CA  
Edith Parker, VA  
Jerry Plummer, CA  
Llona Plummer, CA  
Margaret Riegel, TN  
Patti Rossier, VT  
Lila Shafer, CA  
Paula Solomon, VA  
Mila Traun, TN  
Mary Washington, CA

The following have contributed \$100 to become Life Members  
of the Braille Revival League:

Jane W. Bente, NJ  
Thomas Doren, NY  
Jeffery Friedlander, OH

Audrey Levine, NY  
Christopher Mulkin, IL  
Jill O'Connell, GA

**KEEP IN TOUCH!!**





B R L

FREE MATTER  
FOR THE BLIND

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Springfield, IL 62702

Ralph E. Bartley

1108 State Avenue  
Kansas City, KS 66102